

*The President.* Do you?

*Hillary Clinton.* You can chime in.

*The President.* So you can chime in. If you know any of the lines when I read it in this wonderful book—see the pictures, can you see

it—you say the lines, too. Okay? Okay, here we go. “The Visit of Saint Nicholas.”

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. Prior to his remarks, a group of carolers sang for the audience.

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of United States Military Forces for Implementation of the Balkan Peace Process *December 20, 1996*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

In my report to the Congress of June 21, 1996, I provided further information on the deployment of combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces to Bosnia and other states in the region in order to participate in and support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led Implementation Force (IFOR). I am providing this supplemental report, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on continued U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia.

We continue to work in concert with others in the international community to encourage the parties to fulfill their commitments under the Dayton Peace Agreement and to build on the gains achieved over the last year. It remains in the U.S. national interest to help bring peace to Bosnia, both for humanitarian reasons and to arrest the dangers the fighting in Bosnia represented to security and stability in Europe generally. Through American leadership and in conjunction with our NATO allies and other countries, we have seen real progress toward sustainable peace in Bosnia. We have also made it clear to the former warring parties that it is they who are ultimately responsible for implementing the peace agreement.

Approximately 9,000 U.S. troops currently are deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina under NATO operational command and control as part of the current Stabilization Force (SFOR) total of about 35,800. All NATO nations and 18 others, including Russia, contributed troops or other support to IFOR and most will continue to provide such support to the follow-on force, discussed below. Most U.S. troops are assigned to Multinational Division, North, centered

around the city of Tuzla. In addition, approximately 6,900 U.S. troops are deployed to Hungary, Croatia, Italy, and other states in the region in order to provide logistical and other support to SFOR.

Consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1031 (1995) and the North Atlantic Council decision of December 16, 1995, IFOR has now successfully accomplished its mission to monitor and ensure compliance by all parties with the military aspects of the Peace Agreement initialed in Dayton and formally signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. War no longer rages throughout Bosnia. Weapons have been cantoned, troops demobilized, and territory exchanged. While inter-ethnic tensions remain, the killing has ended and peace is taking hold. Building on its accomplishment of military tasks that established the necessary environment for civilian implementation, IFOR also assisted in the overall civilian implementation effort, including elections support, support to the international criminal tribunal and the facilitation of freedom of movement of civilian persons. IFOR also stood ready to provide emergency support to the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES).

In order to contribute further to a secure environment necessary for the consolidation of peace throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO has approved, and I have authorized U.S. participation in, an IFOR follow-on force to be known as the Stabilization Force (SFOR). The United Nations Security Council authorized member states to establish the follow-on force in UNSCR 1088 of December 12, 1996. Transfer of authority from IFOR to SFOR occurred on December 20, 1996. The parties to the Peace

Agreement have all confirmed to NATO their support for the SFOR mission. In particular, Bosnia and Herzegovina has indicated that it welcomes SFOR.

SFOR's tasks are to deter or prevent a resumption of hostilities or new threats of peace, to consolidate IFOR's achievements, to promote a climate in which the civilian-led peace process can go forward. Subject to this primary mission, SFOR will provide selective support, within its capabilities, to civilian organizations implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement.

NATO has planned for an 18-month SFOR mission, to be formally reviewed at 6 and 12 months, with a view to progressively reducing the force's presence and, eventually, withdrawing. I expect the U.S. force contribution to SFOR to be about 8,500, less than half that deployed with IFOR at the peak of its strength. Many of the U.S. forces participating in SFOR are U.S. Army forces that were stationed in Germany. Other participating U.S. forces include special operations forces, airfield operations support forces, air forces, and reserve personnel. An amphibious force is normally in reserve in the Mediterranean Sea, and a carrier battle group remains available to provide support for air operations.

IFOR's withdrawal has begun, on a schedule set by NATO commanders, consistent with the safety of the troops and the logistical requirements for an orderly withdrawal. A covering force of approximately 5,000 troops, drawn primarily from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, deployed to Bosnia in November to assist in IFOR's withdrawal. During IFOR's one-year mission, U.S. forces sustained a total of 13 fatalities, all resulting from accidents. Twenty-one American servicemembers were also injured in accidents. As with U.S. forces, traffic accidents, landmines, and other accidents were the primary causes of injury to IFOR personnel.

A U.S. Army contingent remains deployed in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as

part of the United Nations Preventive Deployment force (UNPREDEP). This U.N. peace-keeping force observes and monitors conditions along the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, effectively contributing to the stability of the region. Several U.S. Army support helicopters are also deployed to provide support to U.S. forces and UNPREDEP as required. Most of the approximately 500 U.S. soldiers participating in these missions are assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 63rd Armor, 1st Infantry Division. A small contingent of U.S. military personnel is also serving in Croatia in direct support of the UNTAES Transitional Administrator.

U.S. naval forces continued, until October 2, to assist in enforcing the U.N.-mandated economic sanctions as part of NATO's participation in Operation SHARP GUARD. Because the economic sanctions have been terminated, U.S. naval activities in support of Operation SHARP GUARD have ceased. U.S. naval forces will remain on call to provide assistance should economic sanctions be reimposed.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive, and in accordance with various statutory authorities. I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed about developments in Bosnia and other states in the region. I will continue to consult closely with the Congress regarding our efforts to foster peace and stability in the former Yugoslavia.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate.

## **Statement on the Anniversary of the Bombing of Pan American Flight 103** *December 21, 1996*

On this day 8 years ago, Pan American Flight 103 was savagely torn from the skies over

Lockerbie, Scotland. We have not forgotten the 270 victims who perished in that cowardly act